

TOWSON TAVERN

It is felt by many that the tavern which Ezekiel Towson was running in the 1760's may have been the business which began the long history of Towson as a commercial center. As a crossroads service center and later as a courthouse town Towson has been a gathering spot for many for over 200 years. During that time there have been several inns and hotels in the town but for most of that long period there was a tavern and hotel on this particular spot. The stone building which was known as the "Towson Hotel" was razed in 1929 and it may well have contained part of Towson's tavern.

The tavern is survived only by a few photographs and the boundries of its large lot which give the east side of the 500 block of York Road its unusual shape. It is ironic that that same lot today supports several entertainment and eating establishments, one of which includes the word "tavern" in its name.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Towson Tavern (site)

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

COUNTY

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT
☐ BUILDING(S)
☐ STRUCTURE
☒ SITE
☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC
☐ PRIVATE
☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS
☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☐ OCCUPIED
☐ UNOCCUPIED
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☐ YES: RESTRICTED
☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED
☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE ☐ MUSEUM
☐ COMMERCIAL ☐ PARK
☐ EDUCATIONAL ☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
☐ ENTERTAINMENT ☐ RELIGIOUS
☐ GOVERNMENT ☐ SCIENTIFIC
☐ INDUSTRIAL ☐ TRANSPORTATION
☐ MILITARY ☐ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE, zip code

___ VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

New Courts Building

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Towson

Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

___ FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

BA-1456

7 DESCRIPTION

DEMOLISHED 1929

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☐ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☐ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☐ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE Fall, 1978

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

See Attachment

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

It is felt by many that the tavern which Ezekiel Towson was running in the 1760's may have been the business which began the long history of Towson as a commercial center. As a crossroads service center and later as a courthouse town Towson has been a gathering spot for many for over 200 years. During that time there have been several inns and hotels in the town but for most of that long period there was a tavern and hotel on this particular spot. The stone building which was known as the "Towson Hotel" was razed in 1929 and it may well have contained part of Towson's tavern.

The tavern is survived only by a few photographs and the boundries of of its large lot which give the east side of the 500 block of York Road its unusual shape. It is ironic that that same lot today supports several entertainment and eating establishments, one of which includes the word "tavern" in its name.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See Attachment

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

WAYNE L. NIELD, II
HISTORIC TOWSON, INC.

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

INTRODUCTION

The three recordable buildings in the 500 block of York Road on the east side of the street are problematical not only because of alterations but because of additions and the degree to which buildings share foundations, walls, etc. These buildings were erected in the late 19th century and early 20th century on an historic site.

The history of the entire block is an interesting one. On the 1853 Zur Horst map one can see that the "Hotel" occupies a trapezoidal lot bounded on the West by York Road, on the North by Joppa Road and on the East by Hillen Road. A five acre lot being offered by Benjamin Payne as a possible site for the new Court House lies to the South. On the 1877 Atlas it can be seen that much development took place during the next twenty-four years or so after 1853 including the laying out of streets and lots in a gridiron plan with a North-South axis. The hotel, however, remains on its large irregular lot which forms nearly an entire block and it appears to be using all of that space except for a tiny parcel on Pennsylvania Avenue containing the newspaper office of W. H. Ruby. In addition to the hotel itself there are several large outbuildings. Deeds and old plats indicate that these buildings included at least the stables necessary for boarding travelers & horses, and a stone springhouse.

In its time Towson has had several hotels and taverns which were logical and necessary establishments in a town that was both a crossroads service center and county seat. The hotel which stood on this site until 1929, however, is believed to have been the oldest having been built by the Towsons in the 1760's. That roads, including the important York Turnpike, were laid out relative to the building's location and that it was an important gathering place for over a century and a half are facts which gave it tremendous significance as a landmark.

By 1898, however, the hotel no longer dominated the large and centrally located lot. The Bromley Atlas of that year shows that in addition to the little newspaper office two other larger buildings which had their own outbuildings were constructed facing York Road. The southernmost is labeled as belonging to J. German and the northernmost is Towson National Bank. Parts of these buildings are believed to remain today being contained in Robinson's Liquor store (Bank) and the Kent Lounge. By the time of the 1920's America had become "motorized" and Towson had become suburbanized. Hotels, at least outside of the city, gave way to motels or "motor courts" as they were first called. The landmark which had dominated this block and which had indeed helped to foster the town itself was razed in 1929 and replaced by a movie theatre and shops.

Little or nothing remains of the era in which this block was one of Towson's open spaces occupied only by the necessities of the hotel except, that is, for the irregular shape of the block itself. The only open spaces are the asphalted parking lots behind the more than twenty commercial structures of the block. There are two buildings which were late 19th century neighbors to the hotel and along with the movie theatre are the only structures of the block currently being recorded (1977-78).

What is known about the tavern building is based primarily on a limited number of existing photographs, quite a few 19th century newspaper references, land records and the information provided by an account of the hotel's demolition that was printed in the Baltimore Sun, December 1, 1929.

Court records prove that Ezekiel Towson was keeping a tavern as early as 1768 and land records suggest that it was on this same site. The Towsons held this property until 1802 and it changed hands many times afterwards with deeds and advertisements referring to a "tavern stand" and their name. What is most uncertain seems to be an accurate understanding of what kind of building evolution took place between 1768 and 1929 when the successor to Towson's Tavern, the Towson Hotel, was demolished. An unsubstantiated tale of the Towsons which mentions a log structure and two frequently reproduced 1920's photographs of the stone building known as "Towson Hotel" are the main body of evidence as to what kind of building(s) served as the inn during the 158 year period in question.

In the 1920's photographs a nearly square stone building can be seen which is 2½ stories high with an equilateral hipped roof. The stone appears uncoursed and uncut except for the window arches and an attempt at quoining. The building is five bays wide, five bays deep and a smaller recessed wing can be seen on the east side. The east wing appears to be of equal height, is perhaps three bays wide and two long and has galleries on the south side. This wing gives the building an L-shape that is verified on the Hopkins map of 1877 and later maps and plats.

The fenestration has symmetrical openings, however, there are three types of sash: 2/2 on the first floor, 6/6 on the second and 3/3 on the third level. The 1926 photo of the south facade shows a 1/1 sash in the easternmost bay of the first floor. What are presumed to be casement windows lighting a basement peer slightly above the ground surface. The windows of the first two levels have flat stone arches and the bottom windows of the west facade contain solid raised panel shutters. There are three panels per shutter, two of equal size plus a smaller one on top which is the same geometric arrangement as the windows themselves.

One source, backed up by the 1853 Zur Horst map, states that the Towson Tavern was oriented to the crossroads facing Joppa Road (as it originally ran on the south side of present day Hutzlers) while the Hopkins, Shealey, Bromley and other maps show the building facing Northwest with more of an orientation towards the York Turnpike or at least the intersection. The documented story of Ezekiel Towson's concern over the routing of the York Turnpike in 1799 is proof of the tavern's direct relationship to that road, but suggests as well that the original building may have had a different orientation. This point is significant insofar as there do not seem to be any photographs of the north-east side of the building.

The 1920's photographs, however, show quite plainly that the main side of the Towson Hotel, as it was then called, was the west (northwest) facade. This is the only visible facade with shutters, a centrally located sign but more importantly, a centrally located entrance. The building was entered by a single glass pane door which had a transom.

The south (southwest) facade of the main block has two entrances each being reached by three steps. If one numbers the five bays from West to East

on this side, doors occupy the first bay and bay # 4. Windows define the other bays and it should be noticed that there is a greater distance between bays # 2 and #3 than between any of the others. The south side of the east wing appears to have doors in its innermost bays and a window in the easternmost bays of the first and second floors. The porches are supported by tall square posts and the banisters are decorated with crisscross balusters. Like the main block the third level is vented by knee-windows.

Interior-

There is little printed information concerning the interior although it is not impossible that oral history could still fill this gap. The Clark article which appeared in the Sunday Sun, December 1, 1929, gives some information about the building although the article is vague in its sources. In reading it, however, one is told that:

- the stone walls were 18" in thickness
- the wreckers found logs in good condition that were "used for building the original interior."
- the tavern was enlarged c. 1799 to provide 13 bedrooms on the second and third floors and that the first floor contained a dining room, bar, kitchen, pantry, ready room, lobby and private quarters for the proprietor and his twelve children.
- George Washington is reputed to have slept here.

In the 1970's this last bit of information immediately casts doubt upon the credibility of the other "facts" and it is somewhat uncertain in the detailing of the rooms whether or not the description is for their use in 1799 or at the time of demolition. The information about the thickness of the stone walls or the removal of the logs suggests that the author at least knew witnesses if she did not witness the destruction of the building herself. It can be deduced from the article that there were at one point at least more than twenty rooms in the building used by both the Towson family and the patrons and that there were definite divisions of space relative to use.

One might further assume from the 1920's photographs that the main block was divided nearly in half by a north-south wall (ie. separate entrances for these halves on the south facade) and that there was a north and south half as well as suggested by the centrally located entrance. The conspicuous absence of a window in the # 2 bay of the second floor of the south facade plus the unequal distance at this point between bays # 2 and # 3 on the first floor suggest that a stairway may have been located here. The photograph is cut off at the roof level and a tree is somewhat obstructive but the presence of a third level window suggests that this solid area of the south wall is not relative to an interior end chimney.

In the same photograph (see p. 5 Towson Bicentennial) one can barely see what appears to be an end chimney on the east wing. One can assume that this chimney served the kitchen area not only because of the tradition in this area of a "kitchen wing" but also because of the relation between the back of a house and the mundane activities of cooking, washing, etc. The heat and smells associated with these chores along with the unsightliness relative to the keeping of food animals, wood chopping and so on was quite often delegated to the rear of a building and hidden from the main street. It is no coincidence that in

the 1926 photograph we see wash hanging from a line on the porch of the east wing.

One last factor relative to the interior arrangement is the chimney seen in the 1920's photograph of the northwest (main) facade. A single chimney cap can be seen on the northeast side of the building in a position expected of an interior end chimney. There is none on the opposite end, however, and if this chimney served fireplaces it gives some indication of where fireplace rooms might have been located.

Alterations-

We are in error to consider the 1920's photographs of the "Towson Hotel" as pictures of a colonial tavern. In both of the photographs one can see obvious changes in the fenestration and what is perhaps evidence of an addition. The tall 2/2 windows seen on the first level of both the northwest and southwest sides are obvious Victorian alterations, as is the 1/1 sash in the east bay on the first level of the southwest facade. Seen most clearly in the photograph of that side is a vertical line in the wall dividing bays # 2 and # 3. Realizing that this line may represent an electrical conduit or some other attached object it still seems worth pointing out that the line also appears to be a break in the masonry. The odd width in between bays # 2 and # 3 bisected by this line is quite like one would expect to see if bays # 1 and # 2 were later additions.

Assuming for a moment that this was the case then the three easternmost bays of the main block constituted a center hall plan in an L-shaped stone house. Given the identical chain of title that this building shares with the Schmuck House these architectural similarities can not be overlooked. The two buildings (even beyond consideration of the hotel having an addition) share:

- stone construction
- L-plan
- long porch in ell
- Towson-Schmuck-Sheailey ownership

It is also interesting to note that John Wilhelm appears in that same chain of title and that the sale of his estate in 1823 contained a two story stone dwelling which was nearly new.

The hipped roof and knee windows, stone construction and single end chimney give this building a Federal era look which it shares with its immediate neighbor, the Thomas Whittle house. Thomas Whittle is believed to have been a builder whose house still stands right behind the tavern site at # 510 Delaware Avenue. It, the Schmuck House, and one other building are the only structures in central Towson predating the Court House. None of these buildings, the "Towson Hotel" included are colonial structures and they are Federal era (1790-1830) structures at the earliest. None is without Victorian additions and/or alterations.

The most likely periods of change in the evolution of the "Towson tavern" into the "Towson Hotel" of course begin with the pre-revolutionary construction. Tradition, supported by the single reference by Clark to interior logs, suggests that the first building may have employed log construction. 1799 seems like another significant date because of the increased business Ezekiel Towson might have expected from the new turnpike. 1823 is another since at this time John Wilhelm's tavern stand (appearing in chain of title) was being advertised for sale containing a log house and two story stone house that was "nearly new."

The Adys' ownership during the second half of the 19th century is likely to have seen some changes and whatever Victorian elements possessed by the building would have been acquired during this period. A petition filed by Mary Ady in June of 1880 tells us that the hotel was at that time "badly in need of repairs" and stated that the building would need new spouting, floors and repairs to the porches.

Outbuildings-

A pre-automobile era inn that provided food and housing for travelers meant that it had to serve the needs of both people and animals. The Towson Tavern is likely to have had such dependencies as a carriage house, stables, a privy, dairy, meathouse, washhouse, et. al. The deeds for this building suggest that a farm was associated with the tavern stand and Hahn and Behm state that Edward Ady supplied his guests with "vegetables from his garden, milk and cheese from his dairy, meat from his farm and wine and grapes from his arbor." If this was the case then perhaps food storage and processing structures were not necessary direct dependencies of the hotel, but on the farm close-by. The petition of 1880, however, mentions the "buildings on said property."

The only outbuildings for which there is documentation are the stables and a springhouse. A row of stables behind or south of the southeast end of the building appear on both the Hopkins 1877 Atlas and the one published by Bromley in 1898. Hopkins shows a row of three contiguous stables running in an east-west direction and Bromley shows but two. Mrs. Ady's testimony concerning the condition of the stabling suggests the possibility that the westernmost stable to be the largest of the stables and it appears to have stood directly on the Old Hillen Road, later called Delaware Avenue. Bromley indicates all three stables to be of frame construction (Bromley does not consider log construction in his color-coded scheme and shows no log buildings in Towson. The East Towson Survey identified several log houses, however, and this survey has encountered references to log outbuildings on the Towson property, Bowen property and others).

Both the Hopkins and Bromley atlases show a building on the northeast corner of the hotel property that is standing at the intersection of Joppa Road and Delaware Avenue. Bromley indicates that it is frame. It assumes the odd shape of that corner, has indentations on its south side and is either connected or adjacent to the largest stable. It does not, however, have the cross-hatch which both atlases give stables. The indentations have in the case of the John I. Yellott House for example proven to be indicative of additions to a building. The structure appears large and given its location was probably a service building of some kind but its actual purpose remains a mystery. References to blacksmiths, wheelrights, etc., in the neighborhood, lead to possibilities but nothing more.

The springhouse appears throughout the chain of title from B. Payne (1850's). It, like the hotel, was constructed of stone.

TITLE SEARCH FOR TOWSON TAVERN/HOTEL

<u>Liber</u>	<u>Folio</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
159	29	February 9, 1887	Mary E. Ady et. al.	Towson National Bank
<p>Equity Docket 7, Folio 197 Case # 4265. June 21, 1880. Judicial Record 177, Folio 311 Petition of Mary Ady mentions: "...said hotel and the buildings upon said property are badly in need of repairs; that it is necessary to its preservation new spouting be put upon it at once, some new flooring be put down, the porches be repaired and certain improvements be made to the stabling on said property."</p> <p>This also contains a list about conveyances ie. - Andrew German, 1880; William Ruby, 1881; Towson National Bank, 1887.</p>				
118	502	June 11, 1880	Joshua F. Cockey & wife	Mary E. & Virginia Ady
117	525	June 23, 1880	<p>First Part: Joshua F. Cockey Second Part: Mary E. & Virginia Ady Third Part: Louisa E. Lee Exec. of Will & Testament of Daniel Lee Fourth Part: A. Jackson German</p>	
112	225	June 10, 1879	Samuel F. Butler	Mary E. & Virginia Ady
112	253	June 18, 1879	Samuel M. Ady Admin.	Samuel Butler
49	144	June 8, 1866	Benjamin W. Payne LEASE to	Edward Ady
11	428	April 27, 1855	Benjamin Payne	Francis & Edward Ady et al
<p>"Beginning...stone planted on the east side of the Hillen Road supposed to be a tract of land called "James Meadows"..."</p>				

BA. 1456 (SITE)

PLAN OF

COWSONTOWN.

TOWSONTOWN.

Real Estate Agent.

H. L. BOWEN,

Surveyors and Engineers.

WHEELER & MOLAN.

Dr. Bosley

BALTIMORE

Smedley

Prop.
J. E. Talbert

R. R. Boorman

WASHINGTON

C. H. Mann

S MEDLEY

HOUSE

Enos Smedley

AVE.

CHESAPEAKE

COURT

HOUSE

PENNSYLVANIA

AVE

ALLEGHENY

AVE.

YORK

DELAWARE AVE.

AVE.

VIRGINIA

JEFFERSON

Dr. Bosley

Miss Julia
Barron

Estate of Mrs. E. Ware

Estate

Chew

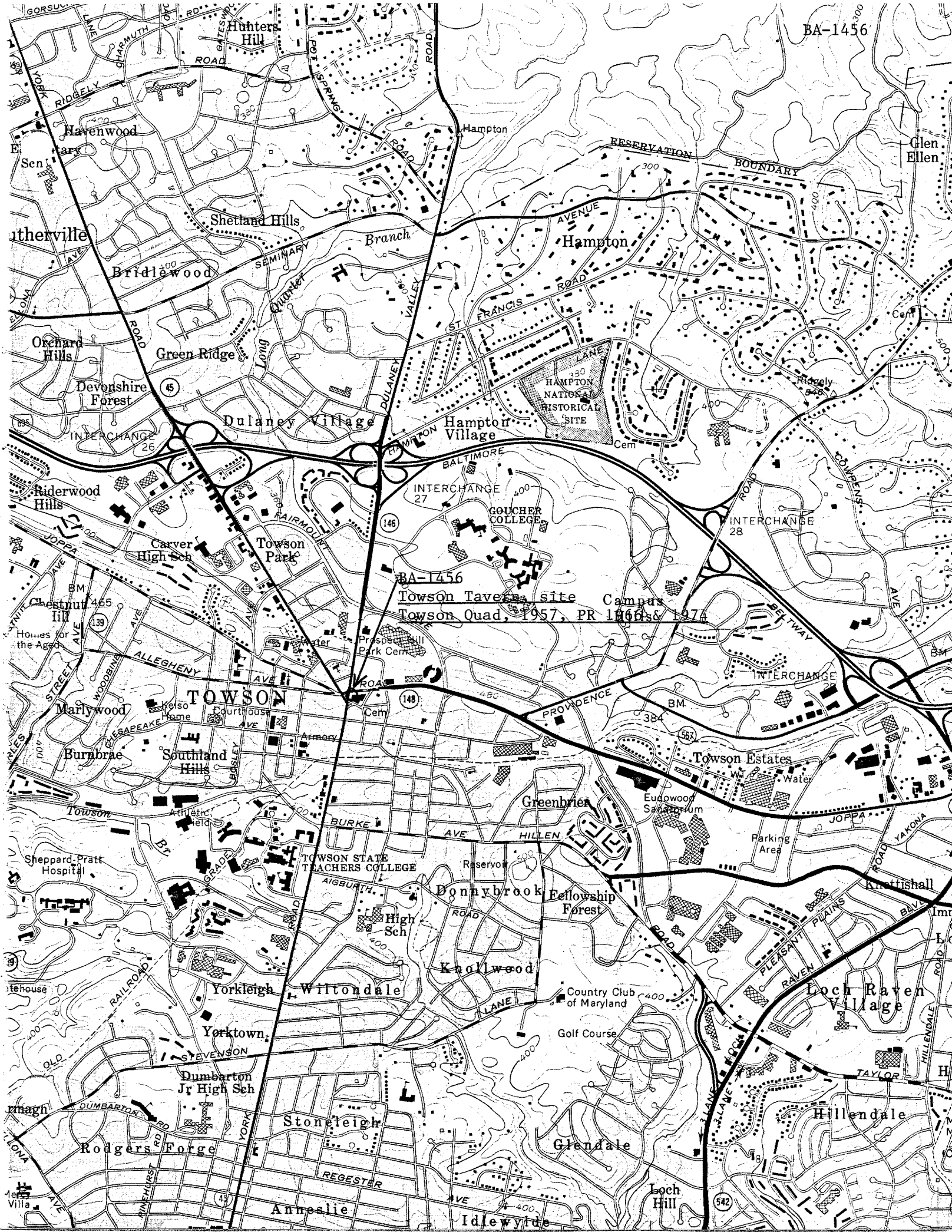
C. H.

EPSON
M. E. CHURCH

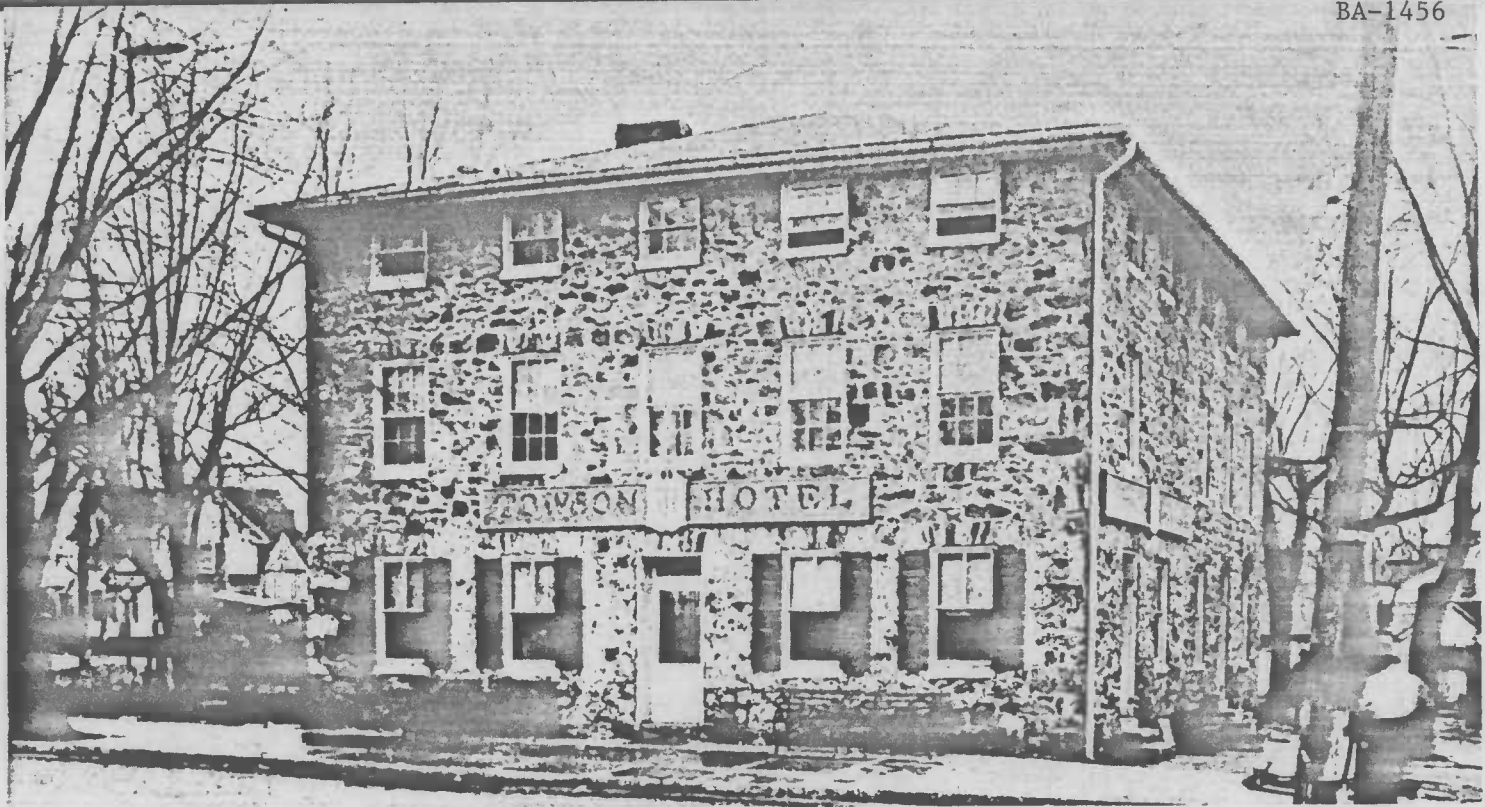
Chew Estate

Scale 200. feet per inch.





BA-1456
Towson Tavern site Campus
Towson Quad, 1957, PR 1968 & 1974



An Inn at the Crossroads

When the Towson brothers selected their homestead, they showed the foresight of born entrepreneurs. The Joppa Road was the principal artery connecting central Baltimore County with the port and county seat at Joppa. In addition, a road linking the rich farmland of southern Pennsylvania with the port of Baltimore had been completed in 1743, less than ten years before the brothers' arrival. In the first month of its existence this road carried "no less than sixty wagons" of flaxseed to Baltimore, a sign of the future importance of the York Road.

Perhaps from the beginning the Towsons conceived of establishing a business which would take advantage of this traffic. Perhaps some trade was done. We cannot know for sure, but we do know that in 1768 Ezekiel Towson, William's son, built a stone tavern near where Hutzler's is now. A document of the court of 1768 shows the inn well prepared to serve travelers. Its bill of fare of two dozen items included the following, priced in pounds, shillings, and pence:

Stableage with good Clover or Timothy Hay per Night & Day or 24 Hours	0.2.0
Wine & Beer from London or Bristol	0.1.6
a Hot Meale of Roast or broiled with Small Beer Cyder	0.1.6
Breakfast or Supper	0.1.0
Toddy made of Country Rum or Brandy per Quart	0.0.8
Lodging per night with clean Sheets	0.0.6

Hahn, George H. and Carl Behm III

1977 A Pictorial History of a Maryland Town: Towson. Norfolk, Virginia: Donning Co. Publishers.

The success of the tavern hung in the balance in 1799 when the road to York was being fashioned into a turnpike. The original plans called for the turnpike to pass "thirty-two perches" from the tavern. Petitioning the Maryland legislature to change the route, Ezekiel Towson noted that he had kept his tavern many years "for the entertainment of man and beast." If the lawmakers would route the road past his door, he promised to donate any land needed for such a change. Alone, the innkeeper inaugurated the venerable Towsonian tradition of private gain by political transaction. The direction of the York Turnpike was changed, and Towson town and its tavern thrived. Ezekiel prepared his inn for an increased patronage.

The Towson Tavern soon boasted thirteen bedrooms on the second and third floors as well as a first-floor dining room, bar, kitchen, pantry, reading room, lobby, and private quarters for Ezekiel and his twelve children. (Ezekiel apparently was never at a loss for household help.) It is said that among the boarders at various times were Washington (of course) Lafayette, and members of the touring Prussian royal house, who were stranded in the Towson Tavern for many days during a snowstorm.

When the Towson family scattered and Ezekiel died, the inn was sold and resold to many proprietors during the next century. Edward H. Ady, whose tenure dominated the